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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Portrait of an Archbishop

ATTRACTED by a chance reference on the radio to an episode in the book, we recently made acquaintance with an ecclesiastical biography of unusual interest, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* by John G. Lockhart. Mr. Lockhart's biography of the former Archbishop of, successively, York and Canterbury, was actually first published in 1949, and we do not know whether it is still on sale. However that may be, we found the book extremely interesting, and the following paragraphs may serve to bring to the notice of students of recent ecclesiastical history this portrait of an Archbishop and Primate of England.

The subject of Mr. Lockhart's biography, Cosmo Gordon Lang, was, by birth and origin, neither English nor Anglican, but Scottish and Presbyterian—to be sure, he was one of the most successful members of that traditionally successful race. He was, incidentally, we believe, the only Scot and non-Anglican by birth to become eventually the head of the Anglican Church and the Primate "of all England"—the official style of the Archbishops of Canterbury. In no sense a great man, and in some senses a despicable one, a kind of modern "Vicar of Bray"—much more successful actually than was his immortal prototype!—Lang undoubtedly exercised very considerable influence, not only in professional ecclesiastical circles but, equally, in the political and social affairs of his time. His best known incursion into current non-ecclesiastical affairs is, no doubt, represented by the prominent part he took in the abdication of Edward VIII (December 1936). To a certain extent, our present monarch might be said to owe his throne to the late Archbishop. However, whatever opinion one may form of the tangled motives that lay behind the "palace-plot" which—in a so-called parliamentary democracy!—put out Edward and put in George, it is at least quite certain that the active intervention of the then Archbishop Lang in the sorry affair did no credit either to him personally or to the ethics of Christianity which he professed to be upholding.

However, we are anticipating matters a little. Cosmo Gordon Lang was born in 1864, the son of a Presbyterian minister of the established Church of Scotland. After a period of study in Glasgow University he came up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he enjoyed a conventionally "brilliant career." He won the Brackenbury History Scholarship at Balliol, then under the mastership of the famous Benjamin Jowett, most famous of all Oxford Dons, the outstanding Oxford College. Lang went on to take first-class honours in History and second in "Greats" (Classics and Philosophy). Rather ironically, his solitary failure before graduating was his initial failure to pass the entrance examination of "Responsions" (usually known at Oxford as "smalls"). Lang failed in arithmetic, a disaster which, it is intriguing to learn, had been experienced by, perhaps, the most celebrated

alumnus of Oxford University, the great Mr. Gladstone himself. After an initial failure to become a Fellow of All Souls College, Lang secured that "blue riband" of the University, and continued to enjoy his Fellowship and the emoluments thereof down to the end of his life.

The Oxford of Dr. Jowett and of Lang's contemporary at All Souls, the future Lord Curzon—"I am George Nathaniel Curzon, a most superior Person," as the contemporary university doggerel went—was a much more aristocratic preserve than it is to-day. Lang himself was far from wealthy, but his reputation for ability was already well established. In the course of Mr. Lockhart's lucid narrative, we get interesting glimpses of some of the future Archbishop's famous contemporaries including the most famous of all, the already legendary Dr. Jowett himself, Master of Balliol. The famous Master, however, does not appear at his best in these pages. We are given a puerile anecdote of the Master's indignation when one of his pupils—not, of course, Lang, who was far too discreet!—wrote about "every social reformer from Jesus Christ to Charles Bradlaugh." Evidently the Founder and the First President of the National Secular Society was, emphatically, non persona grata in the Tory and Anglican Oxford of the 1880's! Assuming the existence of an historical Jesus as depicted in the Gospels, it seems very unlikely that this Oxford of snobs and plutocrats would have taken much notice of the humble carpenter of Nazareth either!

Upon graduating, the future and still Presbyterian Archbishop at first intended to study Law, with a view to practising at the Bar, and actually began to read in legal chambers with this object in view. However, his distinguished career at Oxford which, far more than Canterbury, has always been the spiritual and temporal headquarters of Anglicanism, had opened up a new and, ultimately, even more dazzling career for the offspring of the Scottish manse. In 1890, he was ordained a clergyman of the Church of England. Already a very ambitious man for whom a great future was predicted, one must assume that this was hardly a leap in the dark and that Lang, who was always a shrewd ecclesiastical politician, had a pretty good idea that the Church of England offered him an at least equally brilliant career as would any secular profession.

Be that as it may, with powerful Oxford backing from the start, the ex-Presbyterian convert got on like the proverbial "house on fire." Successively, he was curate of Leeds, Vicar of Portsea, Bishop of Stepney; at the age of forty-four, he became the youngest Archbishop of York (in 1908) since the Reformation and, eventually in 1928, he succeeded the retiring Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Davidson. He was, we believe, the first Anglican Churchman to hold both Archbishoprics in succession.

This dazzling ecclesiastical career was not purely the result of Divine predestination. Lang courted assiduously, his critics added, obsequiously, everyone who had the requisite influence to assist his career: among his

patrons were Queen Victoria herself, Lord Salisbury, who made him Bishop of Stepney—in succession to the ineffable Winnington Ingram—Mr. Asquith, who made him Archbishop of York—the Liberal Prime Minister had known Lang at Oxford, though they were not, as has often been asserted, contemporaries at the University—and, lastly, Mr. Baldwin, to whom Lang owed his “translation” from York to the still more elevated Canterbury. Eight years later, when Baldwin was again Prime Minister, the Archbishop repaid him handsomely by his assistance in the Abdication affair. For a King who married a divorced woman and personally insisted that his unemployed subjects should, at least, not die of slow starvation, was about equally offensive to official tradition in both Church and State!

However, whilst Lang had, as we suggested above, not a little of the time server, of the Vicar of Bray in his mental composition, no one could possibly have called him a fool. On the contrary, he was a very able man endowed with almost every attribute of worldly success. The present writer still vividly recalls receiving a prize in his schooldays from the then Archbishop of York, and the eloquent and witty speech which the Archbishop delivered on that occasion. It emerges from our author's pages that the Archbishop was the kind of man who would have made a name in any walk of life to which he had seriously applied himself.

Though an eminently successful, Lang was not a really great man. He was neither an original thinker, a profound scholar, nor a statesman. It seems clear that his influence belonged entirely to his own generation and that he is already a forgotten man by its successor. However, this admirable biography is well worth reading, in particular for the vivid and, sometimes grotesque glimpses it gives of ecclesiastical and university life.

In particular, the fantastic episode of the ribald anthem of All Souls, “The Mallard Song,” being vigorously chanted by the octogenarian ex-Archbishop Lang in the presence of his scandalised successor, the present Archbishop.

Lang retired in 1942, giving the excellent reason that he wished to do so, “before people stop saying, ‘must he go, can't he stay,’ and begin saying, ‘can't he go, must he stay.’” An admirable example to many a famous “has-been” who obstinately outstays both his powers and his welcome! Lang himself survived his immediate successor, Archbishop Temple, and died suddenly of heart failure outside Kew Station whilst hurrying to catch a train on December 5, 1945 at 81 years of age.

He was the congruous offspring of an aristocratic society which has already passed away, and such a career as his would be already impossible to-day. One might, we think, accurately describe this “Great Churchman,” this Anglican Primate, as an amalgam of two of his most famous ecclesiastical predecessors, Cardinal Wolsey, who was actually Archbishop of York, and the Vicar of Bray, who would, no doubt, have liked to be Archbishop of Canterbury.

F. A. RIDLEY.

Parsons will always keep up their character, but as it is said there are some animals the ancients knew which we do not, let us hope our posterity will miss the black badger with tri-cornered hat. Who knows but some reviewer of Buffon or Pliny may put an account of the parson in the Appendix? No one will then believe it, any more than we believe in the Phoenix. I think we may class the lawyer in the same natural history of Monsters; a green bag will hold as much as a lawn sleeve. The only difference is that one is fustian and the other flimsy.—KEATS.

## REPENTANCE

### A Dialogue

PREACHER: Sir, I have come to console thee in the spiritual affliction which thy sins have brought on thee. I heard that thou hast been sick; and, although the Lord doth not charge us to visit the infidel, I have come to thee with the faint but altruistic hope that I may be able to save thy soul from the fiery perdition which it is nearing. I hope by making clear to thee thine undone condition to bring thee to see the necessity of calling on the blessed name of Him who died for us in order that perchance He may pardon your folly. O sinner, wilt thou repent?

PHILOSOPHER: I appreciate your coming to console me after I have been sick and am well again. What should I repent of? Repent because I have used my limited power of reason to search out the truth of life? It is as much the prerogative of man to use his brains to think as it is for a bird to use its wings to fly.

PREACHER: Thou stiff-necked and untoward son of iniquity! Doth not even the woe of sickness and sin which God in His boundless mercy hath sent on thee soften thine heart? Wilt thou ever scoff at the mercies of the Great Potter? Thy present plight, rash philosopher, is the result of thy sins. Take heed before the time is snatched from thee and thou art plunged into the depths of hell there to suffer forever. “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” This sickness from which thou has recovered was a merciful harbinger sent of God to warn thee to act, to think, to make thyself right in the sight of the Great Judge.

PHILOSOPHER: But what if He has determined otherwise?

PREACHER: Then praise Him that He honoureth thee so in sending thee to hell. Stubborn man, doest thou not appreciate so great a favour? O but think of it! O rant not foolishly in thine iniquitous heart! Submit thyself to God; and, if He roasteth thy wretched soul in hell forever, consider it a blessing to be so highly rewarded by so just a God and see that thou acquittest Him and sayest that He is just.

PHILOSOPHER (*to himself*): I will humour him and show where his head is soft. (*To the preacher*): I weep. My soul doth rejoice. How could my Creator be so wonderful! I am a mean, unworthy vessel; but He hath determined before the world was, to send me to hell. O how wonderful! How glorious! What have I, who never asked that I should be born, what have I done to receive such a rich reward? Yea, my cup runneth over. Verily it is good to be alive.

PREACHER: See! He hath spoken peace to thy soul! I see the spirit of repentance incarnated. I see it before my very eyes.

PHILOSOPHER: That thou dost, good Doctor. I am now supping of the goodness of the bowels of mercy. Ah, how I regret my long years of sin! Remorse doth bite me, friend Doctor. O what shall I do?

PREACHER: O but keep repenting, sinner.

PHILOSOPHER: O! It hurteth worse!

PREACHER: In your bosom? In your bosom, brother?

PHILOSOPHER: No, damn it! In my leg! Come out of there, demon! (*He hurls a louse to the floor*). 'Tis a companion of one of the faithful whom thou hast visited. O sweet relief from sin! O wretched carnality! Fie on those who make merry of supremely serious and holy things!

PREACHER: Thou art right: 'tis a companion of one of the faithful whom I have visited; for I keep no such com-

panions. But be not deceived: this is a ruse of Satan, the ever-present enemy of men. He hath assumed the form of this insect, as he hath assumed other forms such as that of a serpent. I will use Christian power to exorcise him. (*Addressing the louse*): O devilish *pediculus humanus*, O devilish, wingless, bloodsucking, hemipterous insect, incarnate form of Satan, begone! Touch not this penitent sinner! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, before whose holy name demons have quaked and fled, depart! (*To the philosopher*): But wait, methinketh that the devil or his brother is biting me! O! Sin hath got me! The evil spirit hath left thee and entered me. O! It hath snared my leg!

PHILOSOPHER: Yea, remember that the Scripture saith, "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Take thou a knife and whack off thine offending leg.

PREACHER: Cut my leg off! Why you damned fool!

PHILOSOPHER: Alack, such language! The evil spirit hath devoured thee whole. He hath swallowed thee, guts and all. Pray, reverend, pray!

PREACHER (*he knocks the louse from his leg*): Ah, the plague hath left me. The demon is exorcised. I feel the virtue returning. O power of Jehovah! O brother, religion is a wonderful thing! It helpeth thee to take the fiercest blows of adverse fortune with gracious equanimity. No vain metaphysics devised by sinful minds is needed. Nothing but the blood of Jesus to make thee clean and sweet! Art thou completely converted now; or dost thou stand in need of further repentance?

PHILOSOPHER: I am converted, charlatan, and have been for a long time, to reason and good sense. Here is the door; please exercise your free will by leaving.

PREACHER: Charlatan! Then you have been joking, fascal!

PHILOSOPHER: Not another word.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR.

### SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS

AS we have heard so much of recent years of the revolutionary changes that have taken place in scientific thought since the nineteenth century passed away, it is with special interest that we welcome the publication of a book which should enable us to ascertain precisely what these revolutionary changes are. *Scientific Thought in the Twentieth Century\** presents us with a series of essays dealing with the various departments of modern scientific thought, each written by an expert in his own particular field. These essays are all well written, interesting, and instructive. They all clearly indicate that great progress has been made, but there is nothing to indicate that such progress is any more than might reasonably have been expected to occur in the course of fifty years and, for the most part, the writers are modest enough to make no other claim. There are, however, those who are not so modest, who boldly declare, with an air that defies contradiction, that nothing short of a revolution in scientific thought has taken place during the past fifty years. It is with some aspects of this claim that the remainder of this article will be concerned.

Sir Harold Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal, in support of his claim that a revolution in scientific outlook has been brought about during the past fifty years, refers

to the application of photography to astronomy, to telescopic improvements, and to the more accurate determination of stellar distances. But these are nothing but normal progressions from the astronomy of classical physics and it is a misuse of language, to say the least, to refer to them as "revolutionary." Many other "revolutionary" claims are as apparently without any foundation. Prof. F. Llewellyn Jones refers to "revolutions" in our ideas of *space* and *time*, *cause* and *effect*, and of *determinism*. Apart from the connection of these ideas with Relativity theory and atomic physics, if we take the trouble we shall find that all these ideas were as fully and as competently discussed by the nineteenth-century philosophers, especially by Mill, Hodgson, Spencer, and Lewes, as they are by the scientific amateur philosophers of the present day. Even the Quantum Theory would not seem very strange to anyone who had read the chapter on "The Rhythm of Motion" in Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, published in 1862.

If some twentieth-century scientists knew a little more of the scientific and philosophic thought of the century they are so ready to decry, they might hesitate before advancing their "revolutionary" claims. Sir Cyril Burt, who writes the section on "Psychology," apparently only knows G. H. Lewes as "the friend of George Eliot," and he refers to Lewes' *Physiology of Mind* as a book "on the physiology of the Mind," which as Lewes treats "mind" as a function, it definitely is not.

Much of the "revolutionary" confusion would have been avoided if scientists themselves had recognised the nature of the processes involved in the formulation of scientific laws. A law of nature never tells us what *actually* happens, but what *would* happen in the absence of disturbing factors. Scientific laws are ideal constructions in which the individual characters of the concretes disappear, and only the characters that are common to them all remain. The first law of motion: "Every body continues in its state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, except in so far as it may be compelled to change that state by impressed forces" is an absolute truth under the implied conditions, which exclude the influence of disturbing factors. The fact that the conditions are never fulfilled does not affect the validity of the law. Kepler's first law that: "Every planet describes an ellipse, the sun occupying one of the foci" is the ideal law, describing what would be true if there were only one planet revolving round the sun; but as there are several planets, acting on each other with forces varying with their varying positions, they cannot move in exact ellipses. Neither does the radius vector (the line joining the centre of the sun to the earth's orbit) ever sweep out equal areas in equal times. (Kepler's second law).

From the foregoing it follows that, in actual practice, prediction can never be more than a matter of probability, the degree of probability depending upon the proportion of constant to variable factors; the probability being high, amounting almost to certainty, where the constants are many and important and the variables few and trivial, and very low when the position is reversed. We see this exemplified at one end of the scale by the science of astronomy, in which predictions may be made for thousands of years ahead, and at the other by the science of sociology, where prediction is little more than a matter of guesswork. Taking isolated instances we may find the law violated in every case. Taking a sufficient number of instances the individual differences are cancelled out and the law thus becomes more and more manifest with the increases in the number of repetitions. From the

\* Watts & Co. 402 pp. including 15 pp. Introduction and 7 pp. Index. £2 2s. net.

scientific point of view the disturbing factors may then be ignored. This view of natural law is no twentieth-century "revolution" in scientific thought, but was fully discussed by G. H. Lewes, "the friend of George Eliot," in his *Problems of Life and Mind* as far back as 1875.

We are now in a position to assess at its true value the statement made by Prof. F. Llewellyn Jones that "when the behaviour of the fundamental particles of nature is examined, it is found that the basic laws of the natural world are not the strictly causal laws of Newton, but are the laws of probability—the laws of chance. Instead, therefore, of the laws of statistical mechanics being (as was thought in the nineteenth century) an expedient on account of our ignorance of the ultimate laws—they themselves now turn out to be the ultimate laws." (pp. 105-6).

Can anyone doubt that a nineteenth-century scientist, introduced to the phenomena of the atomic world, where the variables are out of all proportion to the constants, and the speculations concerning which are mostly matters of dispute among the atomic physicists themselves, would attempt to deal with them by any other than statistical methods? But even statistical methods, to be of any use, must give constant and accurate results; to give constant and accurate results, there must be an inevitable recurrence of certain factors. We cannot have a constant result, even when solely dependent on averages, without constancy among the factors of which the result is the expression. All of which distinctly points to the operation of strict deterministic law—in the microscopic, as in the macrocosmic world. To say, as Prof. F. Llewellyn Jones does, that the substitution of statistical for ultimate laws "signifies a change in the interpretation of reality comparable in importance to the Renaissance" is sheer bombast which aims to place a profound thinker like Kepler on a lower level than a mere compiler of statistics!

It is disappointing to find that in the work under review there is no section dealing with the Theory of Relativity, a distinctively twentieth-century subject. This is all that is lacking in a work every student of the latest developments in modern scientific thought is recommended to read.

FRANK KENYON.

### G.B.S.—ANOTHER VIEW

IN his article, "St. Bernard Shaw" (*The Freethinker*, March 11), Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann deals with a book by Miss Blanche Patch, Shaw's secretary, entitled *Thirty Years with G.B.S.*

As an enthusiastic admirer of Shaw, Mr. Du Cann is by no means satisfied with Miss Patch's estimate of her late employer. He says, "She did not wholeheartedly worship Shaw as Boswell did his hero. . . . She prides herself on never being a Shavian. . . . She was not even a sympathiser. . . . He often repelled and exasperated her."

But in what way do these presumed defects detract from her work? To those who are not worshippers of Shaw, they are to be viewed rather as qualifications than disabilities. What the general reader needs is not the indiscriminating eulogy of a devotee, but a plain, unbiased account of the impressions of Shaw's personality derived from her long professional association with him. That he often repelled and exasperated her is saying no more than that Shaw had temperamental failings like the rest of us and was not the social paragon which Mr. Du Cann's partiality would fain represent.

When she records anything which Mr. Du Cann considers derogatory to his idol, he says "she trifles and belittles." "Who cares," he asks, "whether Shaw was vain of his eyebrows?" No one, to be sure. Those who read Shaw with any attention will soon discover that he was vain of many things besides his eyebrows. But Mr. Du Cann is not quite consistent. He condemns Miss Patch for recounting these little personal items by a comparison of her book with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, which he calls the standard of the best biography. But what other biographer has portrayed his subject's defects in more detail than Boswell? Nothing is suppressed. We see the great "Moralist" as his associates saw him—his ungainly figure and slovenly dress, his scrofulous scars and voracious manner of eating, his rudeness and his superstitious oddities. In relating these "trifles" Boswell's object was certainly not to "belittle" Johnson, but to present him as he knew him. The same argument will serve to vindicate Miss Patch. She describes Shaw as Boswell described Johnson, simply as she knew him, and that is what most of us who are not Shavian fanatics would desire.

In dealing with Shaw's religion Mr. Du Cann may be said to let himself go. In an ebullition of paradoxical praise he makes Shaw both a "Saint" and "the greatest Freethinker of our lifetime." To reconcile these incongruous characters he has recourse to the usual practice in such cases of putting his own construction on the terms. Shaw's religion, according to Mr. Du Cann, though "an enigma to Miss Patch and to many Churchmen and Atheists alike" is "sensible, consistent, logical, and perfectly understandable." The God of the Churches he rejected as childish. . . . "But a purpose behind life which he christened the Life Force was his god whom he worshipped by his work, the fulfilment of his purpose." We are told that "he regarded other religion or non-religion, whether Catholic, Protestant, Atheistic, or other, through the spectacle of his own religion. To this test he brought everything. Is it serving or disserving the true purpose of the Life Force? If yes, he approved it; if otherwise, he combated it."

It may be that I lack something of Mr. Du Cann's perspicacity, but if I am to judge by the foregoing exposition, Shaw's religion is no less an enigma to me than to Miss Patch.

What Shaw meant by a Life Force neither he nor anyone else has succeeded in making clear. That life is the product of a force or power we must admit—in other words, it had a cause. What that cause was is a question, the answer to which makes all the difference between the Atheist or Freethinker and the Religionist. To say that the Life Force had a "purpose" in creating life is virtually to say that it is a god. Purpose, or the capacity of pre-conceiving and prosecuting a desired end, can only be the attribute of Mind or Intelligence, and in ascribing such a quality to his Life Force, Shaw was merely ringing the changes on Theism, or giving another name to a divine power.

That he believed in what Mr. Du Cann calls "such theological concepts as the life to come, the community of saints, the immaculate conception (of all women) and the everyday reality of Godhead and the Kingdom of Heaven" (though I don't, for the life of me, know what it all means) is likely enough. Shaw was not crystal clear on his religion, and, as his interpreter, Mr. Du Cann has faithfully followed his original. To assert that Shaw was "the greatest Freethinker of our lifetime because his free-thinking extended into every phase of human thought and

activity," is to stretch the application of the term *Freethinker* beyond its true meaning which is strictly anti-religious, and simply denotes "one who denies revealed religion." It has no reference to any other "phase of human thought and activity." Moreover, the term *Freethinking* is negative in character and implies *unbelief*. It cannot, therefore, be properly applied, either in its anti-religious or negative sense, to a positive belief in any such "phases of human thought and activity" as politics, economics, etc. The misuse of the name (as in the case of *Rationalist*) has become so general that we now have as many Freethinkers as there are differences of opinion on any subject. The position has become almost farcical, and unless the abuse is checked by a definite ruling on the part of the recognised Secular Authority, will soon make necessary the adoption of some denotative term more foolproof.

In its proper and only sense, Shaw was not the greatest Freethinker of our lifetime. His religion was vague and inconsistent, and might fitly be described as a hash of various beliefs derived from other sources. As Miss Patch acutely observes, "He would frequently imagine a meaning of his own for someone else's idea," and in this way he took toll of both Blake and Butler.

Mr. Du Cann continues in the same strain of fantastic eulogy—"this St. Bernard was far more saintly than the other St. Bernard of the Church. In the calendar of saints, both of Freethought and Creative Evolution, he was one of the very greatest." What imaginable ground (beyond the sameness of name) Mr. Du Cann can have for his comparison is known only to himself.

Other passages might be cited in which Shaw is exalted to a state of consummate excellence; but why go on? The foregoing is enough to show that to praise (or blame) without judgment or restraint is to defeat our object.

A. YATES.

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION

READERS who have, from time to time, written of my new orientation on religious problems, will, of course, discount what I have to say about a booklet just published. I am unable, however, to resist the temptation to write of it, if only to exercise the very human tendency to say "I told you so." The booklet in question, which I think every Freethinker should read (even though he may feel that it is a piece of very special pleading) is Prof. Alister C. Hardy's *Science and the Quest for God* (Lindsey Press, 1s. 6d.). Readers who recently criticised my discussion of the problems of science and religion, and who pointed out that those whose views I advanced as indicating a new spirit of accommodation between these two spheres of knowledge were for the most part astronomers or mathematicians, should note that Prof. Hardy is a zoologist—he is, indeed, Professor of Zoology at Oxford. Yet he holds that science and religion are in no way opposed—indeed, he thinks that a really scientific examination of religion would lead to an increase in rational religious belief. Psychology, for instance, can do much to increase our knowledge of religion. And Prof. Hardy points out that there are many people who have a very real feeling that their religion puts them in touch with powers above humanity. He adds that an investigation of those who hold that religion "works" in their private lives might increase religious belief of a rational kind, even though it might tend to decrease the authoritarian attitude.

Of course a booklet which is merely the printed form of a lecture (in this case the Essex Hall Lecture for 1951) cannot possibly work out an involved argument in detail. Many of us, I am sure, would welcome a longer and more detailed statement of Prof. Hardy's argument. Meanwhile, however, the booklet is a well-written and easily-read interim report on what he has worked out. Freethinkers, I know, will not agree with much of it. But it is, I think, a well-intentioned effort at building a bridge between Freethought and Liberal Christianity. And I am assured that not only Christians will welcome it.

JOHN ROWLAND.

### FUN-FAIR FANFARE

We present our Great Fair for the Faithful,  
It opened up well in the past;  
To enjoy it ye must be as children,  
If your eyes would be opened at last.

We don't shy at Sabbath Day sessions,  
We never miss out Holy Weeks;  
We include (in the interests of Science),  
A show full of monsters and freaks.

We'll take you for rides till you're dizzy,  
And not for mere three-minute thrills;  
And many, who savour sensations  
Are purged of life's aches and its ills.

There are donkey rides too—(not for sophists),  
And, to judge by the sour septics' sneering,  
Man and the ass have changed places,  
And the donkey is doing the steering.

We've the world's wonder set of Aunt Sallies,  
Adding savour and zest to your sport;  
No need for the public to pelt 'em,  
Because they're the self-pelting sort.

Roll up—cast your lots with the faithful!  
(It's a very dim chance at the most);  
The whole thing's a two-headed penny  
Spun by a three-headed ghost!

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

### PEACE IN INDIA

Mahatma Gandhi was all for non-violence; Islam is, so a Mohammedan Maulana will tell you, the most truly democratic of religions, in which all are free to worship as they will; Guru Nanak founded Sikhism as a religion of peace. The Sikhs to-day claim that the Hindus have betrayed them; that in East Punjab a Brahman minority tyrannises over them, although they, the Sikhs, had acted as a bulwark against Muslim aggression. Hence, the Sikh Freedom Movement becomes daily stronger, and Pandit Nehru's police vainly hold their leaders in jail. As 1947 showed us these peace lovers can be remarkably murderous. But in this they are of their time when those who invoke most the name of peace are those with the largest armies, the most submarines or the biggest bombs. Not only is the Sikhistan agitation gaining strength, but in Southern India the non-Brahmins press for a separate Dravidasthan. All the arguments Congress used against the British Raj are now employed against themselves. They ought to know the answers.

### ACID DROPS

Several letters have been appearing in the newspapers appealing for prayers for *fine* weather instead of the usual doleful ones imploring the Almighty to give us rain. Most of the faithful were sick of rain after about eight months almost continuous downpour, and we are glad to report that the Lord has hearkened unto them—for here at last comes better weather due, of course, entirely to prayer. What would the world do without our pious prayerful people continually on their knees, and never ceasing to grovel for Christ's sake!

Our very religious journals are jubilant about the fate or postponement of the Divorce Reform Bill in Parliament. It is a striking victory for Christ. "Our (celibate) Lord" said that two married people, even if they hate each other, must live together no matter what happens, and that command settles it for ever. There must be no reprieve, and we can only add that, after all, people who believe in religion and go to church to get married, or even obtain a "civil" marriage but remain religious, should not complain. Surely, if they believe in "our (celibate) Lord," they should abide by his decision.

Many of the religionists who saw Mr. A. J. P. Taylor's "Science has killed religion" in the *Sunday Pictorial* some weeks ago are now yelling that it is not true. The *Sunday Pictorial* has published a few of their letters and he must be laughing at the hopeless credulity, ignorance, and superstition they show. One can only say that if "science has not really killed religion," then, judging by these letters, it ought to. And the sooner the better.

At least one Christian has the courage to admit that he is "inconsistent." He is the Rev. Bryan Green, and in the *Daily Graphic* he admits that, although Christ says, "thou shalt not kill," he would be ready to fight against "being overwhelmed by an atheistic, materialistic, totalitarian Power." Well, it is something publicly to admit that "our Lord" can be wrong sometimes, though Mr. Green still feels that in Christ "we can find forgiveness and spiritual power." Strange that his brother in Christ, the Red Dean of Canterbury, feels the same over Communism—"forgiveness and spiritual power"—and it is a pity that the two Christians can't fight it out between them.

A Swiss pastor, Henri Babel, is campaigning for people to "carry out the Reformation of the Reformation"—a scheme which will be welcomed by the Vatican with rather an ironic smile. Anyway, he thinks this new Reformation can only come out of "the Liberal Movement." But what is this Liberal Movement? Does it accept, for example, the "Incarnation," or "Christ as God Almighty," or the "Virgin Birth," or the "Resurrection?" And which of the 300 Protestants sects *want* to be "reformed"? What exactly would be the solid beliefs of the New Reformers? Anything to do with the Bible? Pastor Babel does not answer in his plea for reform except by the vaguest suggestions. And Christianity is already in a hopeless mess without wanting to be pushed still further in the mire.

Gambling is once again in the news, for the Royal Commission appears to think it is not a Sin against the teachings of Jesus Christ after all. In fact, we were rather surprised not to find that, in actual fact, the greatest Gambler that ever lived was Jesus Christ. However, as

in the case of easier divorce, the Churches are again violently opposed to any easier gambling. No doubt they would rather the money spent on pools or horses should be given to the Church. Only unfortunately the money-owners don't think so.

Our religious Home Secretary thinks that the Fraudulent Mediums Bill, which looks like being passed, is one of the best suggested by a private member—though exactly how the police or even a magistrate is going to decide whether a medium is or is not fraudulent is not made quite clear. Will a medium be asked to produce a materialised spirit in court, or a spirit photograph, or what? A good test no doubt would be if our "master-mind readers" would be able to say before any sentence whether the magistrate or judge believed the medium fraudulent or not, and predict the sentence—if any. We fancy the dignity of the court would explode if such a thing could really happen!

A much more important Bill would be to abolish the Blasphemy Laws which, for sheer insanity, would be hard to beat. One can poke as much fun as one likes at Jove but not at Jehovah—a distinction which must make even our solemnly religious judges wonder whether the law is or is not "a ass," as Mr. Bumble once said in a memorable passage. What exactly is the difference between one God and another? One might ask as well, what is the difference between the witch doctors of Jehovah praying for rain, or the witch doctors of some African totem doing the same thing? Yet in the whole of our democratic Parliament we doubt whether there is one member who would sponsor a Bill for the complete abolition of our insane Blasphemy Laws.

A recent school broadcast was an attempt to prove that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was true. A scientist, a sceptic, and a philosopher were supposed to answer a convinced believer—but, as the object of the broadcast was to convince children in the truth of the Resurrection, they put forward the usual fatuous arguments against, so well-known to everybody who has discussed it. What about the empty tomb? What has science to say to the Angel in the tomb? How can philosophy explain the absolute "uniqueness" of the Resurrection? The three in opposition actually believed the story in the Gospels as being for the most part true! It was fantastic!

Little silver crosses are going to be worn by thousands of parish priests and communicants during the Festival of Britain, to show visitors how strong is their faith. They cost 6d. each, and it is hoped that over 70,000 will be sold—bringing in a sum of £1,750 to the Mission to London Council; and the wearers are expected to talk about religion whenever possible. We think it is a fine idea, and we hope that our readers will be lucky enough to meet these learned protagonists and engage in a lively battle for Christ. The wearers look like having the shock of their lives—and even the silver cross won't protect them from getting to know a few home truths.

Even headmistresses get a little mixed when trying to square "discipline" with Christianity. Miss Rutherford, the Christian headmistress of a Kettering school, insisted recently to the Rotarians that "children must have discipline." Does this mean the Biblical spare the rod and spoil the child . . . ?

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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41, Gray's Inn Road,  
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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Arrangements for the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society in London during the Whitsun week-end are as follows: Saturday evening, May 12, reception of delegates at The Yorkshire Grey, just across the road from Holborn Hall, at 7. Members of the N.S.S. and friends invited. Sunday morning at 10-30, and afternoon at 2-30, business sessions in The Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, W.C. 1, only members of the N.S.S. with current card of membership can attend the business sessions. Sunday evening at 7, a Demonstration in The Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (see list of speakers elsewhere). Reserved seat tickets for the Demonstration may be had in advance, if desired, at one shilling each, from the offices of the N.S.S., 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. J. Clayton finds it possible to begin his circuit of lecture visits. Details will be found in the Lecture Notices column. We sincerely hope that the news is an indication of a definite improvement in the health of Mrs. Clayton.

West London Branch starts its open-air session in Hyde Park to-day (May 6) after a very successful indoor season. Meetings will be held each Sunday, well known speakers, including F. Wood and F. A. Ridley, will be heard. The Branch invites those who gave their support indoors to continue the contact during the summer. A well supported platform is an attraction in itself, especially to the more timid who feel more comfortable in a crowd.

A crowded house welcomed the address on "Spiritualism" by Mr. H. Cutner at Birmingham last Sunday. There was an interesting and "spirited" discussion—including opposition from a number of Spiritualists. A word of thanks must be given to Mr. F. J. Munster and Mr. C. Smith, of the Birmingham Branch, N.S.S., for their generous hospitality to the lecturer.

## A NOTE ON EUGENE SUE

THE interesting article recently written on Eugene Sue's romance, *The Wandering Jew*, by Mr. F. A. Ridley, and the correspondence about his *History of a Proletarian Family* prompts me to say a few words on this prolific writer—perhaps because I happen to have read many of his books (which I possess in their original language) and because there are one or two points about them in danger of being forgotten.

I read the English translation of *The Wandering Jew* as a schoolboy—it was published in Dicks' *English Library*, a publication which enjoyed, for many years, during the latter part of the 19th century, a good circulation among people who were interested in many of the (so-called) second-rate novelists like Charles Lever, Albert Smith, Captain Marryat, Douglas Jerrold, and many others. In addition, Dicks published quite a number of translations from the French—Sue, Paul de Kock, Dumas, George Sand, and others, all of whom were and are still well worth reading.

Eugene Sue, as Mr. Ridley rightly pointed out, was never considered as a writer in the class of Balzac or Stendhal, but this does not appear to have worried him much. He was not particularly interested in the psychological novel with its long descriptions of moods and temperaments, or in describing with minute details the interior of a drawing room. For him, it was the story that mattered, and even the great Alexandre Dumas could not always beat him there.

The son of a medical man, Sue at first determined to follow his father in his career, and spent some years in the French navy, seeing active service as well as visiting many parts of the world. But the itch to write, using some of his experiences as "local colour," came very early to him. His first work brought him an encouraging review from Fennimore Cooper and persuaded him that, like that fine novelist, he could write of the sea. There is, in *Atar Gull*, a dedication which expresses Sue's great appreciation of Cooper's kindness in thus writing of an unknown novelist.

But he soon found that there were other subjects more nearly at home for his now prolific pen, and soon he was writing fashionable novels of society—as he was well off, he could mix in the best circles even in Paris. It was, however, the publication of *Mathilde* which set the aristocracy against him, its picture of "high life" in French society deeply offended the upper classes. At all events, to show that he could do other things, Sue wrote *The Mysteries of Paris*, a terrible account of the underworld in the great city—its pimps and prostitutes, its infamous swindlers, convicts, murderers, a whole host of characters and scenes written with astonishing fidelity and packed with realism and wonderful imagination. The book, which first appeared as a serial, had a success almost, if not quite, equal to that of *The Count of Monte Cristo*—perhaps the greatest of all romances. Both were translated into every civilised tongue, and both had a circulation unequalled by any other work of fiction that had ever been written. And Sue repeated his marvellous success in *The Wandering Jew*, a huge work which shows his extraordinary power of invention, and of thrilling incident. Its plot indeed is of the very essence of supreme melodrama.

He mixed up the Wandering Jew, the legendary figure invented by some early anti-Semites about the 13th century, with a Jesuit plot to gather in a huge fortune for the benefit of the Society of Jesus—a fortune belonging to a

number of heirs in very different circumstances in life. Sue minutely describes them all in their particular environment with Rodin, the master Jesuit—or criminal, you can take your choice—carefully doing his best to get rid of all the heirs without actually murdering them himself. The Wandering Jew has almost nothing to do with the plot and, in any case, one might say the same for the Jesuits. The master-mind, Rodin, might just as well have belonged to a gang of ordinary criminals for, as far as the Catholic religion is implicated; as a religion or as a world power, it does not matter very much. The greatness of the book lies in its superb delineation of motive and passion, of such people as the two young sisters, Rose and Blanche, and their guardian, the old soldier Dagobert, and all the other heirs—all depicted with unerring certainty. No one who reads this masterpiece of romance can wonder why it achieved such a resounding success.

And Sue did not stop here either. He saw with a clear vision the "master and man" classes in the world and realised that it had always been so in history. He commenced his *Mystères du Peuple* with a story about the inequalities in society which led to the revolution of 1848, and he gives a stirring account in the form of fiction of that event which might well have become world wide. The "wage slaves" he describes had a singular and mysterious chamber in which had been deposited the history of their family written by certain of its members throughout the ages, beginning with what happened in Gaul in the year 57 B.C. And the subsequent volumes of the story are supposed to give details of the struggle between the "boss" class and the proletariat right up to the author's own time. There were, I believe, 16 volumes, but I am not sure that Sue carried out his idea in its entirety.

These stories make fascinating reading, and quite a number of historical characters like Julius Caesar are introduced. In an early one, Jesus is made the hero—he is, of course, a proletariat, a working carpenter, and Sue extracts from the Gospels all his speeches in which he is shown to be against the aristocrat, the ruler, and the slave owner. It has always been a surprise to me that this particular story seems quite unknown to those "reformers" who see in Jesus perhaps the greatest Socialist who has ever lived. Eugene Sue himself appears to have been completely without religion, but according to this story; he had an unbounded admiration for Jesus.

It will, I am sure, interest Mr. David Bruce, who has so loyally entered the lists on behalf of Daniel de Leon, that this American Socialist was by no means the first to translate the *Mystères du Peuple*. It was—though I am not sure—first translated just after it was published, and probably appeared in one of the journals George W. M. Reynolds was editing. Some of the stories, with the original illustrations—by H. Anelay—were reprinted in Dicks' *English Library* (vol. 32) in 1892. But in over 40 years of book-hunting I must say that I have never come across any English translation of this very notable work except the one referred to above. I had no idea that the de Leon translation could be seen in several of our public libraries. The only translations I have met with of the romances of Eugene Sue are those of *The Wandering Jew* and *The Mysteries of Paris*—apart from a very few published by Dicks.

But there is one point probably overlooked by Mr. Ridley. It is that Eugene Sue and his publishers had to stand their trial for "blasphemy" and "outrage to public

morals" (or whatever was the charge) for writing and printing the *Mystères du Peuple*. The work, during its long appearance (1849-57) had already been forbidden to appear in Germany, Russia, Italy, and Austria, and the French Government was determined to suppress such a formidable indictment, revolutionary and Socialistic, of the ruling classes. His publishers were heavily fined and sent to prison, but during the trials, Eugene Sue died, and thus escaped the "vengeance" of the rulers of his country. Yet the book could not be suppressed. It was sold by the thousand, and it is said that it brought in a least £40,000 to its publishers alone.

Why an enterprising publisher has never re-issued the 16 volumes—or at least the first five volumes which are perhaps the best—is rather astonishing. But one never knows. They may yet appear and help to give back some of the fame Eugene Sue has, perhaps, so undeservedly lost.

H. CUTNER.

### CHRISTIANITY AND TRUTHFULNESS

TO Christians their religions are divinely revealed truth, and truthfulness is a Christian quality; but Romanists and Protestants accuse each other of falsehood—a "revealed" attitude and method of mutual destruction. For example, Sir B. Windle refers to Draper's *Conflict* as "that ancient dust heap of inaccuracies and falsehoods." Hilaire Belloc in his C.T.S. pamphlet, *Anti-Catholic History: How it is Written* (1914), in examining Prof. Bury's *A History of Freedom of Thought*, says, "My Faith tells me that the Church is right . . . academic authority is unsound . . . writing and teaching in Protestant Universities consist largely in unverified repetition of current errors . . . worse still, the general atmosphere is falsified."

On the Protestant side, *Catholic Truth* gets emphatic condemnation. Dr. R. F. Littledale in his *Plain Reasons Against Joining the Church of Rome*, 1905 ed., says: "The next valid reason, and especially for the unlearned, against joining the modern Church of Rome, is the entire disregard for truth exhibited in its polemics, in its claims, its cults, relics, legends, and even its very office-books. This is, in fact, that peculiarity of its practical system which brings it most definitely into collision with the Word of God" (pp. 117-118). He quotes Gratry: "Do you know, Monseigneur, in the history of the human mind, any question, theological, philosophical, historical, or otherwise, which has been so disgraced by falsehood, bad faith, and the whole work of the forgers [as Papal Authority]? I say it again, *It is a question utterly gangrened by fraud*" (Letter II to Dechamps (p. 119 note). After condemning the "moral" teaching of the "flawless" Doctor of the Infallible Church, St. Alphonso Liguori, he says: "And this broad fact as to the nature of the now accredited Moral Theology of Rome, emphasised by the very low standard of veracity amongst Roman Catholic populations, is the complete refutation of a claim, often loudly made, that the Church of Rome is the one divinely appointed channel through which the Holy Ghost exercises His functions of Ruler and Teacher" (p. 119). Dr. G. G. Coulton in his *Romanism and Truth* (2 vols., 1931), publishes his long letter to Cardinal Bourne, President of the Westminster Catholic Federation, re that Federation's studied secrecy and unfair procedure, in its three bulky octavo volumes, to bring about alteration of history to suit the Church of Rome. Therein he points out eleven



errors, among many falsehoods in these three volumes, concerning (1) the start of violence by Huguenots or by R.C.s; (2) origin of name Protestant; (3) attitude of the English mind towards the Papacy in the Middle Ages; (4) the lives and activities of the medieval clergy; (5) the monastic system and its actual working; (6) the Inquisition; (7) the attitude of the Church towards the poor; (8) Wyclif and the Lollards; (9) the true causes of the Reformation; (10) Luther's life and work; and (11) the comparative responsibility of Roman Catholics and Protestants for religious persecution (vol. I, pp. 124-126). "Popes have led the way with historical falsehoods (vol. II, p. 128). "The first papally authorised edition of the Bible, published by Sixtus V in 1590, under anathema to all who should use any other, was found to be so grossly incorrect that the Blessed Robert Bellarmine needed all his learning and all his diplomacy to save his Church from public derision" (II, 129). "In early 16th century a Toledo Jesuit, Father de la Higuera, sent out copies of historical chronicles which were entirely invented. In 1630, the Jesuit, Melchior Inchofer, to revive the piety of Messina, published a book on a pretended letter written in Hebrew to their ancestors by the Virgin Mary" (II, p. 228). "No less significant is the welcome given by the French clergy . . . to the Dreyfus fraud . . . also by H. Belloc against Dreyfus" (II, 218). "It is the Vatican which fosters the scandal and monstrous wrong of the Dreyfus infamies" (II, 219). "What drove Houtin out of the Roman Church was his discovery that ancient falsehood met him everywhere in his researches, and that the modern hierarchy not only condoned these falsehoods but . . . defended them through policy when conviction was dead" (II, 227).

Abbé Albert Houtin (1867-1912) in his *Life of a Priest*, (Watts & Co., 1927) says: "Alas, since then (entering the R.C. Church as a priest) I have seen everywhere, and always, the organisation of pious lying" (p. 163). As early as 1901 my experience consisted in what I had ascertained and was ascertaining, viz., the organisation of pious fraud everywhere and always, in the present as in the past, in the ancient history of the Church as in its contemporary history (p. 185). Dogmas have their source in contradictions, interpolations, and even in forgeries. His superiors had repeated to him that it is not well to tell the truth (p. 187). The most idiotic stories are easily believed in ecclesiastic circles, where credulity is intensively cultivated (p. 198). Mgr. Duchesne called, in 1900, the majority of the French episcopacy "a gang of rogues" (p. 200), and Mgr. Lacroix their characters even more base than their minds (p. 217). My most recent investigations had led me to the conclusion that it is wrong to attempt to modernise Christianity. It is no more a divine revelation than any other positive religion. Like all the others, it is for the most part founded on fraud" (p. 257).

The titles of Mr. J. Wheless's book, *Forgery in Christianity*, New York, 1930, XXXVI + 406 pp.; and of his pamphlet, *The Church that was Founded on Lies and Forgeries*, Kansas, U.S.A., 1931, 87 pp., explain themselves and prove devastating investigations. He shows how St. Jerome purposely "lied to the glory of God" in mistranslating Isaiah VII, 14 as "a virgin shall conceive, etc., instead of the correct "a young woman conceiveth, etc." (F. in C., p. 64). This fake prophecy is mentioned in Paine's *Age of Reason* together with some sixteen other fake prophecies concerning Jesus, in pages 160-188 in the Pioneer Press edition, 203 pp., 1937, with introduction by Mr. Chapman Cohen, who says there:

"Paine had written a criticism of the Bible that no one in the course of over 140 years has been able to answer" (p. XLII). Mr. Joseph McCabe, in many of his works, exposes *Catholic Truth* and its methods of suppressing, trickery, distorting, and lying. To any one of limited purse, his *The Popes and their Church*, Watts & Co., 1950, 184 pp., price 1s., is a book to be highly recommended. His books cover a wide range of scholarship. Another very effective book is F. H. Perrycoste's *On the Influence of Religion upon Truthfulness*, Watts & Co., 1913, 324 pp. He shows the systematic inculcation of falsehood by councils, popes, bishops, fathers, and doctors of the Churches; the utter uselessness of religion, R.C., Greek, or Protestant, to restrain men from perjury and perfidy; the Canon-law that oaths disadvantageous to the Church must not be kept; the Papal doctrine that no faith is to be kept with heretics; Popes perjuring themselves, absolving R.C. kings, etc. from their oaths, and declaring subjects free from their allegiance. Papal frauds include: Holy Family's house miraculously transported, 1295, to Loreto in Italy (p. 265); similar frauds in Palestine in 1506 (pp. 265-6); in 1864 in Santiago "a public post office for the Virgin, who corresponded personally with her votaries!" (p. 283). One of the fingers of the Holy Ghost was in a monastery in Jerusalem (*Draper's Conflict*, p. 270) "The immense number of these forged documents . . . is one of the most disgraceful features of the Church-history of the first few centuries" (Lecky, *Morals*, I, 400): Truthfulness was taught to the early Persian, but has since been perishing under Christian influences. "The love of truth in many forms was exhibited by the Pagan philosophers to a degree which has never been surpassed, but there was one form in which it was absolutely unknown" (Lecky, *Morals*, I, 430). This form is that it is wrong to act a lie; but Lecky erred there, for the noble Plutarch denounced the acting of a lie (F.H.P., p. 30 quoting *Neander*, I, pp. 28-29).

Truthfulness is rare; the Christians have made it rarer. In 753 Pope Stephen III sent a copy of a forged letter from St. Peter to the King of the Franks; and in the sixth century the commissioners of Justinian made oath upon part of the true cross and upon the keys of St. Peter! The Popes are associated with the Chubb-lock homes of heaven, and with mansions which, apparently, the heretic man shuns. Religion is the Rome man's romance.

GEORGE ROSS.

#### AN ATHEIST POET

I HAVE sometimes wished to find myself in one of Wilfred Pickles' "Have a Go" programmes, and there required to associate the date 1859 with a famous person. Then I should, intentionally ignoring Charles Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* was then first published, mention A. E. Housman, who was born then. Probably, Wilfred would say, "Give him the money, Barney!"

Housman's most famous work is his first, *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896 at the poet's expense. It is a slender volume of 63 lyrics, which take up only about 100 short pages in the edition I have, and I suppose most editions have had about the same number of pages, for Housman once remarked that Frank Harris, for whom he, understandingly, had some contempt, persisted in saying there were 200 pages in the book. Harris, characteristically inaccurate, also described the poet as a

professor of Greek instead, correctly, as of Latin. He came down on me for lunch, wrote Housman, "like a wolf on the fold." Probably Harris wanted details of the professor's private, even sexual life. He did ask Shaw about his encounters with women, and Shaw's reply is recorded. Shaw might have lied; for the popular expression, "ask no questions, get no lies," has sense.

Housman would, I think, not have lied, but he could well preserve reticence, and had an occasional sharpness of tongue and even, but more rarely, a gift for the bludgeon.

The poet, as a Latin scholar, is a subject of which I am incompetent to write much, but one story of him in that capacity has a terseness probably indicative of his formidability in that sphere. It refers to an ode of Horace with the passage "rapiamus amici." Read, "amice," said Bentley (acknowledged by Housman to be the greatest English scholar), because the ode is addressed not to friends, but to a single person. But, adds Housman, that person is not named, as all persons addressed in odes by Horace are; read, therefore, amici, the vocative of one Amicius. Does the name Amicius exist? See this and that inscription. Even so, is the "i" long? See a Greek inscription where the spelling leaves no doubt.

In English he was able, through his knowledge of astronomy, to provide an answer to a request by T. S. Eliot for an explanation of the stanza in Shelley's *To a Skylark*. Keen as are the arrows of that silver sphere whose intense lame narrows in the white dawn clear until we hardly see, we feel that it is there. You will not understand the poets, he said, without astronomy. The silver sphere is Venus as the Morning Star. The moon, when her intense lamp narrows at dawn, is a sickle, not a sphere; when she is a sphere at sunrise, she is low in the west, visible in broad daylight and disappears only when she sets, so that nothing could be less like the vanishing skylark.

Not everyone liked *A Shropshire Lad*. Meredith called it an orgy of Naturalism. I love it, and because of that have read it several times, enough to appreciate that it has faults. In the first place it has a reflection of popular opinion in its imperialistic patriotism, a fault, by the way, also of Meredith. Housman sings, "get you the sons your fathers' got, and God will save the Queen." In the same lyric is the reference, in respect of soldiers who had died abroad, to "friends of ours who shared the work with God," but, of course, God is a vague word with poets, and too apt to slide into their verse. *A Shropshire Lad* has also a lyric with the banality, "the enemies of England shall see me and be sick."

Housman is, of course, a minor poet, neither a Shelley, a Keats, a Byron, nor, I think, even as big as Meredith. His verse lacks any note of gladness. Even its rare humour never seems to lift any poem out of the prevailing sad key. No character in it is nearly as virile as Meredith's Juggling Jerry, who faced his end with the satisfaction of having saved a bit for his "old girl."

Housman did not agree that he was a pessimist. He recalled that George Eliot called herself not an optimist, but a meliorist. He called himself a pejorist.

He had a pretty wit. In according permission to a Mr. Gurney to set some of his poems to music, he observed to his publisher that Mr. Gurney resided at Gloucester Cathedral, along with St. Peter and Almighty God. He did not want Mr. Gurney to print the words of his poems in full on concert programmes (a course which he was sure Mr. Gurney's "fellow-lodgers" would disapprove).

The poet declared he was a deist at 13 and an atheist at 21.

There has been much speculation as to why Housman chose such generally sad themes, e.g., frustrated lovers, suicides, murderers, and early deaths of promising youths. Someone gave to the "mystery" what he thought was an explanation, and another, to the same effect, referred to the poet's mention of a woman, whom he had loved and revered from youth, and added, "a stifled voice told more eloquently than the abrupt words, both what he had won and what lost in her."

Grant Richards, his most continuous publisher, and his friend from 1897 to 1936 (the year of Housman's death) does not accept the story, and the idea that the poet suffered such a tragedy, he thinks wrong. Housman did have a great disappointment—failure in an important examination at Oxford. This caused him also financial worry and remorse, for he needed to succeed for his family's sake, and he failed through carelessness and, possibly, intellectual arrogance. He then obtained a post at the Patent Office, studied at night, and became Professor of Latin in Cambridge in 1892. He would then be 33. As he records 1895 as his most fruitful poetic period, his verse seems, as he has said, not autobiographical.

Becoming more daring, commentators went so far as to attribute his pre-occupation with tragedy, guilt and remorse to sexual perversion. Of this idea Mr. Grant Richards remarks that nothing in the poet's behaviour seemed to justify the aspersion, and his publisher knew him extremely well, spending many a holiday with him in Britain and abroad, sometimes in the company of his (Mr. Richards') own family.

Housman's verse seems sufficiently accountable as springing only from the imagination of a sensitive man who could, as others, e.g., Thomas Hardy, see the sad side of life without himself having been in despair or perverted.

The late criticism of his verse is often amusing; the young artist and poet is, however, apt to scorn his immediate predecessors; but one critic becomes scornful of what he calls Housman's anti-godism, and this for the "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries," because, I suppose, of the words "what God abandoned these defended."

What a shame that all poets are not pious!

J. G. LUPTON.

### PERADVENTURE HE SLEEPETH (I Kings, xviii, 27)

When the surgeon's knife  
Comes cutting through the cells,  
Crushing out life,  
I do not hear their tongueless yells,  
Nor feel the pang this tells.  
Aloud they cry to my fast-sleeping brain;  
These shouting messages complain  
Of their intolerable pain;  
But the God-Brain sleeps on,  
Heeding them not, till anodyne be gone.  
Anon I wake, to know  
The agony that caused their woe.  
One day, perhaps, Lord God will wake  
To realise His great mistake  
In making suffering man;  
Then will He wipe him out; and, sighing, start again.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

SIR,—To attack the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church in this country, as it should be done, is a dangerous business owing to Act 9 of 1925. This Act, or law, can be pressed into any shape or form like a piece of plasticine of the type used in kindergarten schools. I only hope that one of your leading writers will expose our men of God for what they are. Our bunch of super-goddites recently found space in the *Natal Daily News* on Freemasonry, horse racing and gambling, lotteries and the enforcing of existing legislation on Sunday observance.

Some years ago I wrote a letter to the editor of *Die Kerkbode*, the D.R. Church's newspaper, asking this bird to give an explanation to his readers why his paper does not say a word about gambling on the Stock Exchange? Sad to say, no notice was taken of my letter.

This result set me thinking and I commenced investigating the situation with a view to ascertaining what lurked behind it all. I discovered that numerous priests of this Church are shareholders in various commercial, industrial and finance companies. One of these gentry is a managing director in six different companies. This means that his Church work is just a mere side line. He works "Ad Majorem Dei gloriam" only once in seven days. On the other six days of the week he is busy elsewhere. In the *Sunday Tribune* there recently appeared another juicy bit, this time from the Gereformeerde Kerk section of the four varieties of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Towards the end of the last "war to end all wars" 14 or 15 moral rearmament experts from abroad arrived in this country. Among this bunch there are two 100 per cent Afrikaners, one by name Daneel and the other Bremer-Hofmeyr. They arrived in Cape Town fresh as paint from the Vatican where they had an audience with Pius XII, formerly Eugenio Pacelli. Whether he considered them good enough to kiss his toes, I cannot say. At Cape Town they got duly "dined and wined" by two of South Africa's then most eminent political figures, now both dead. These ersatz Buchmanites then vanished. Now and then they got mentioned, in passing, in the Press. At long last they burst into the headlines at a small country township called Heidelberg in the Transvaal. Here, moral rearmament delegates from all over the world met in conference. What these strange birds of passage conferred about remains, for the greater part, a mystery. The greatest mystery of all is: Who finances this bunch of useless vagrants? They lodge in the most expensive luxury hotels. Their pockets are bulging with rolls of banknotes. Not one of the lot is a member of a profession or plies a trade. Not one of them therefore draws a salary. On whose pay-roll are their names to be found? The Dutch Reformed Church, all four varieties for all I know, are the bed-brothers of these Buchmanites to the same extent as they went the whole hog with Billy Sunday, Doktor Torrey and one Alexander, including Spurgeon and other theological luminaries of the past. Gipsy Smith is also one of their beacons of light. They are the sworn enemies of Jehovah's Witnesses because this group is a rival commercialised politico-religious organisation.—Yours, etc.,  
JOHANNA DU TOIT.

**THE MYTH THEORY**

SIR.—Mr. Cutner is entirely right in refuting the silly argument that a divine myth was never before transferred to the historical scene. Any religious movement is the result and sum total of a certain spiritual development, condensed after a process of perhaps centuries, and the outcome then was ascribed to some mythical founder or reformer. It appears to me that there are more striking examples than Krishna, viz.: Buddha (associated with King Asoka), Zoroaster (with King Vishtaspa as his assumed patron), Kung-tse (Confucius), etc. When a child in its cradle, Zarathushtra (Zoroaster), too, was threatened by a "king," by name Duransuram, who drew a dagger to slay him, but the king's hand was immediately withered by Ahura Mazda.—Yours, etc.,

P. G. R.

**DRUID TEMPLE STONES?**

SIR.—From Mr. T. F. Palmer's review of Lewis Spence's recently published *History and Origins of Druidism* in *The Freethinker*, April 1, one gathers that this book's major thesis consists of an attempt to demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, the megaliths of Stonehenge, et alia, could not be temple relics because *Druid temples would have been almost certainly situated in groves of sacred trees.*

This ancient association of temples with trees—which is, incidentally, expressly forbidden in the Christian Bible—is, of course, well known to everyone with any real claim to being educated, but since it is, I think, generally agreed that this country, like most others,

was once densely covered in trees it is surely permissible to presume that these stones were, in fact, originally set up among trees.

If this is accepted then Mr. Spence's reason for rejecting the temple idea would seem to collapse entirely.—Yours, etc.,

M. C. BROTHERTON,

Commdr. R.N. (ret.).

**LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**OUTDOOR**

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY, A Lecture.

Burnley Branch N.S.S.—Worsthorne, Friday, May 4, 7-45 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Enfield, Saturday, May 5, 6 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Burnley Market, May 6, 7 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Hapton, Tuesday, May 8, 7-45 p.m.: J. CLAYTON.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. W. BARKER.

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North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Highbury Corner.—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, May 6, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

**INDOOR**

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 6, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., B.Sc., "Social Psychology To-day."

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